

No. 24

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USAGI YOJIMBO

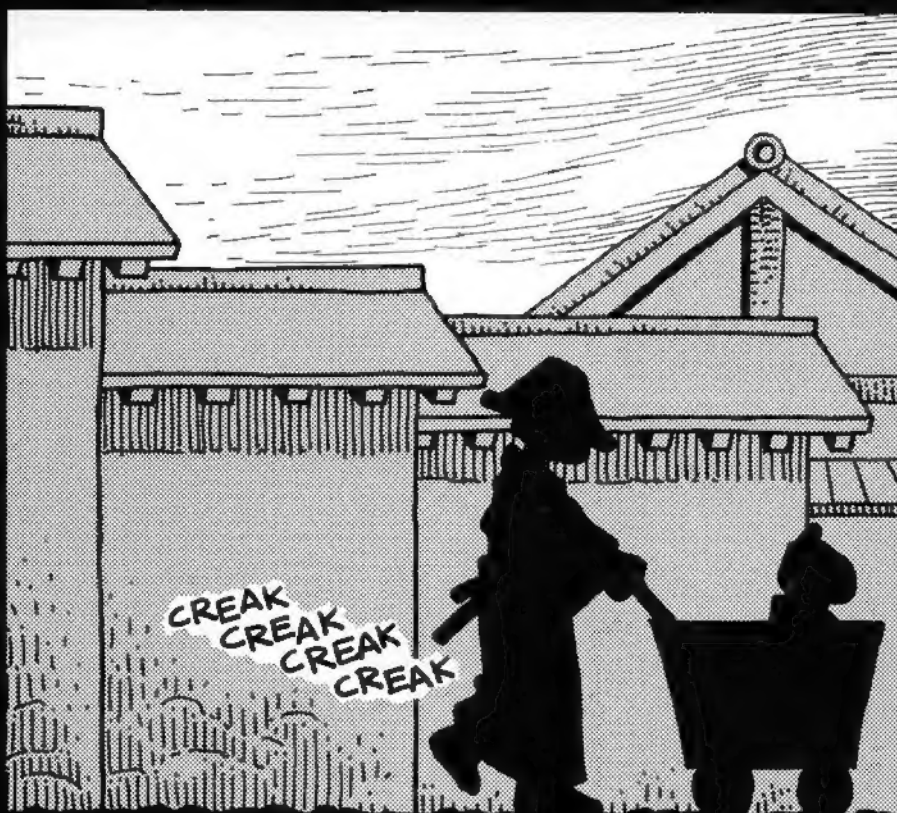
LONE GOAT
AND KID!



SAKAI
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FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

USAGITM YOJIMBO



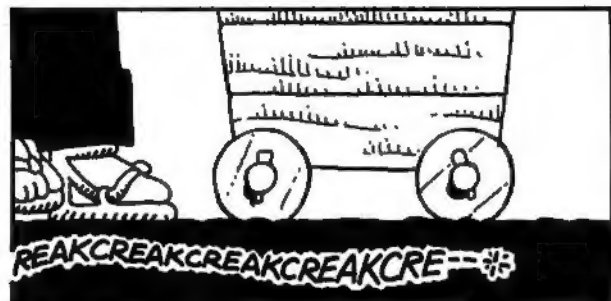
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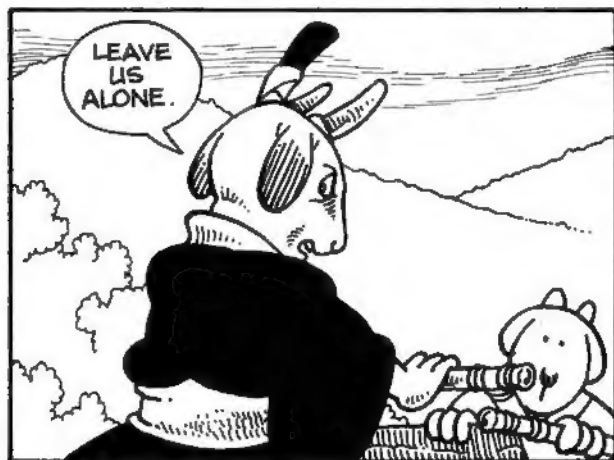
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MARK THOMPSON

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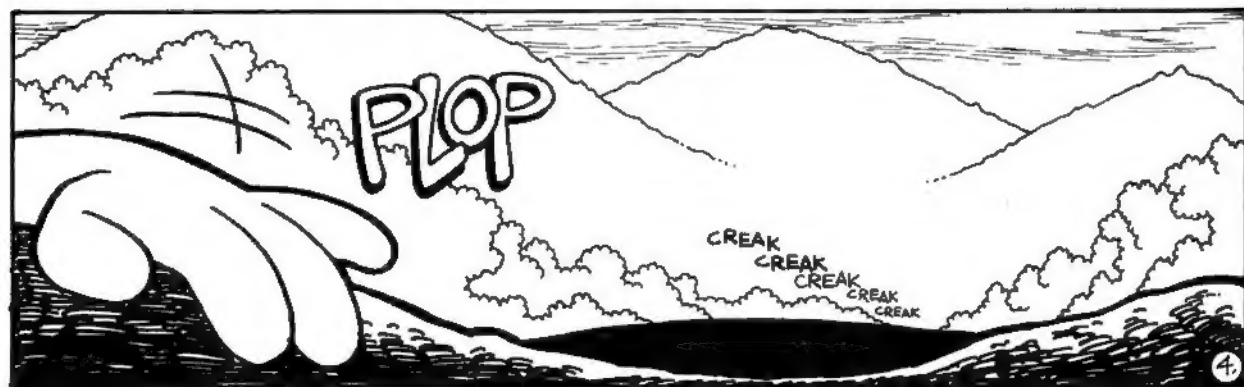
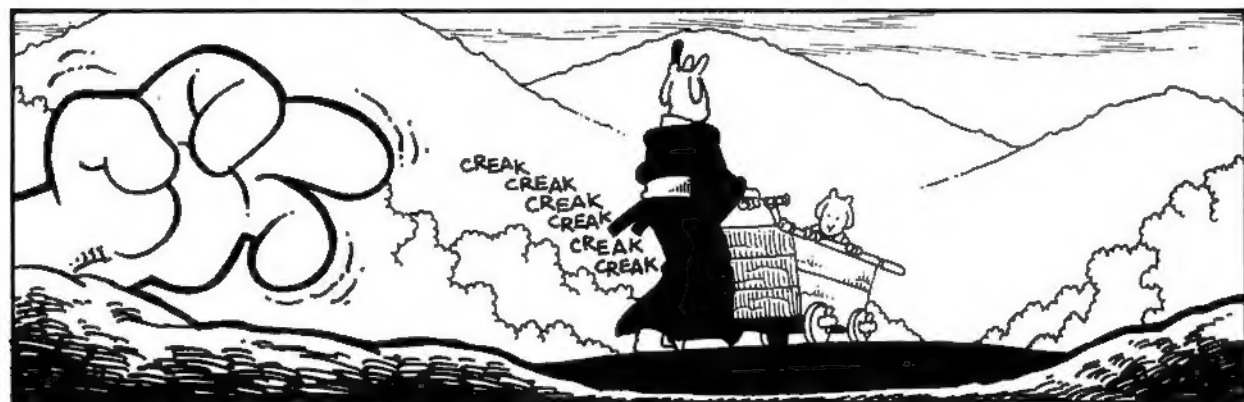
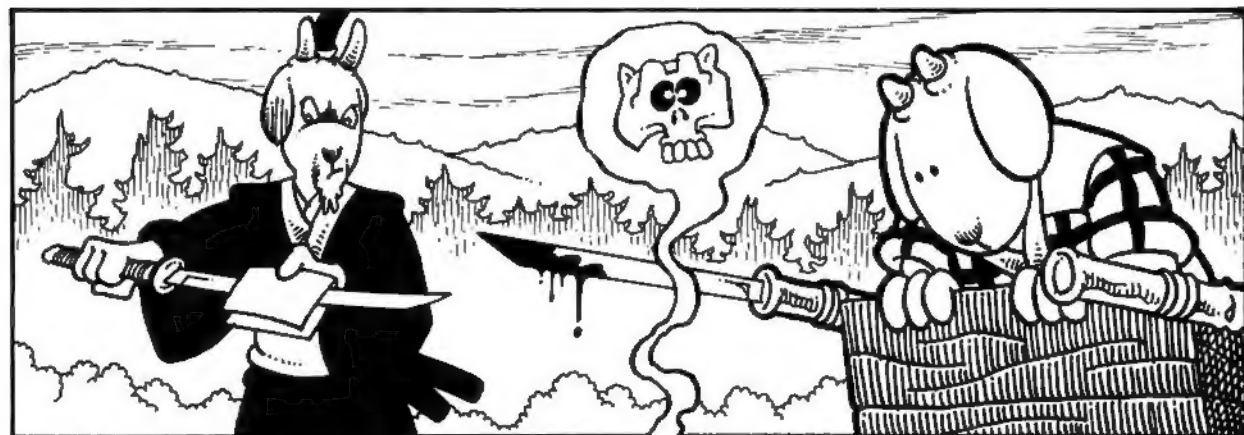
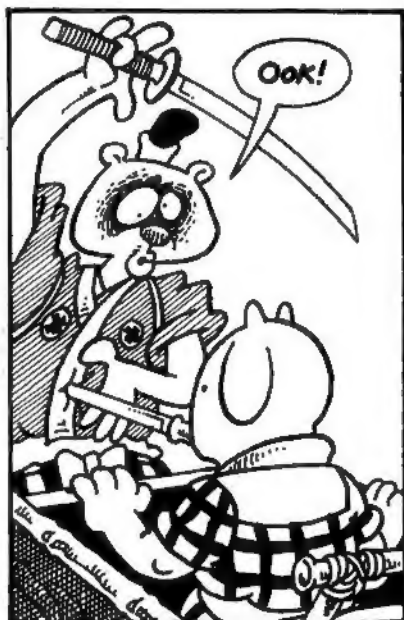
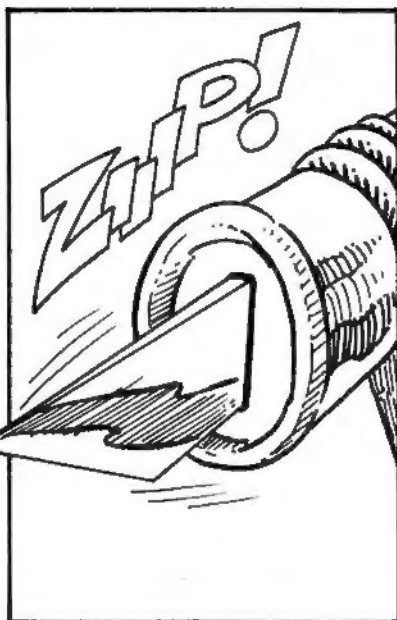
editor
KIM THOMPSON

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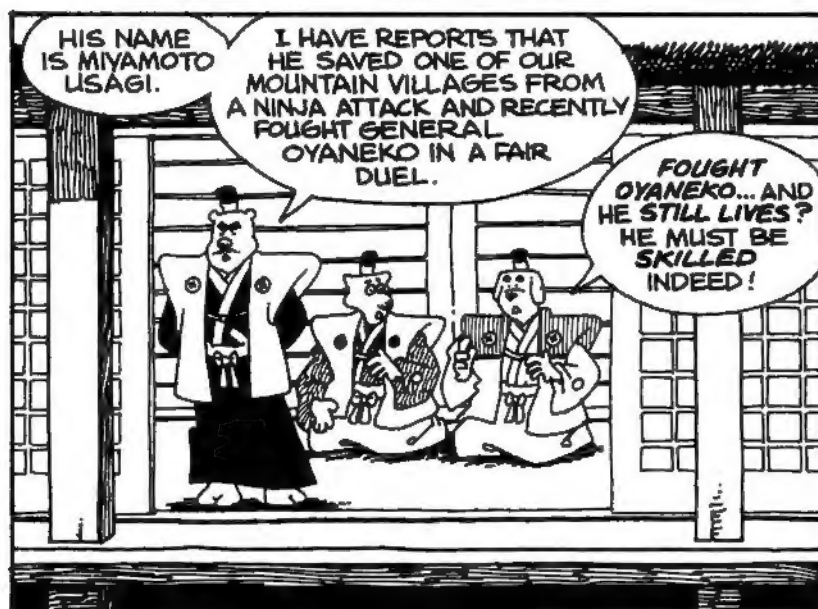


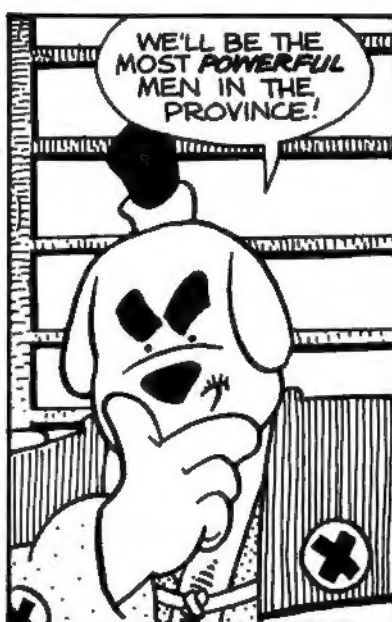


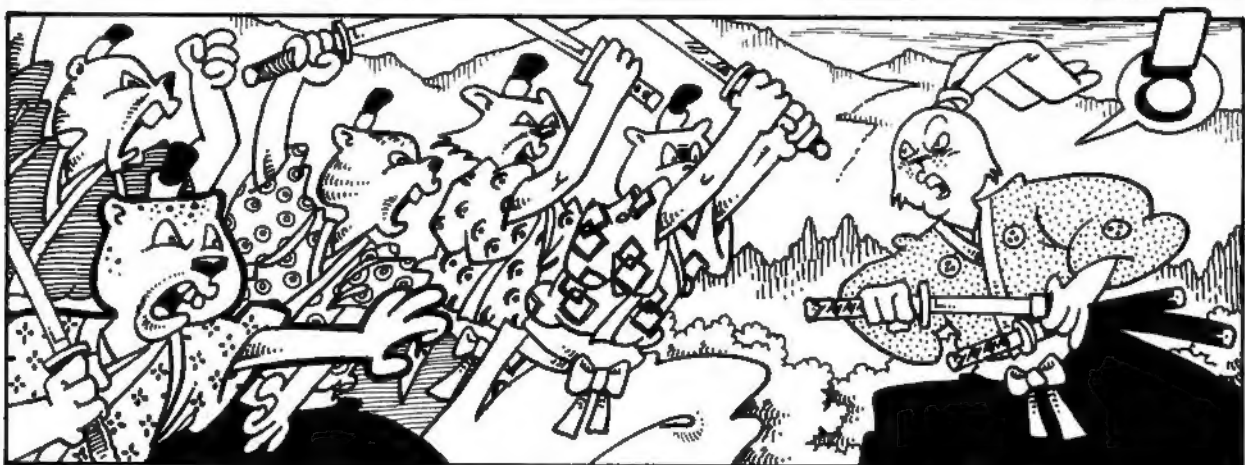
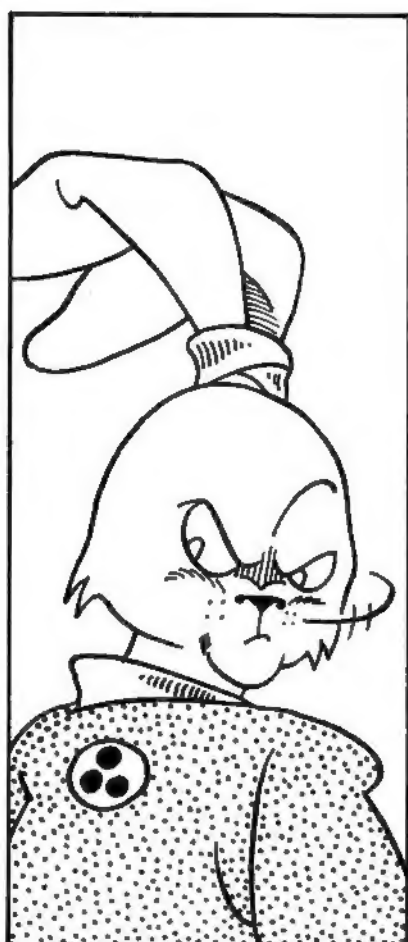


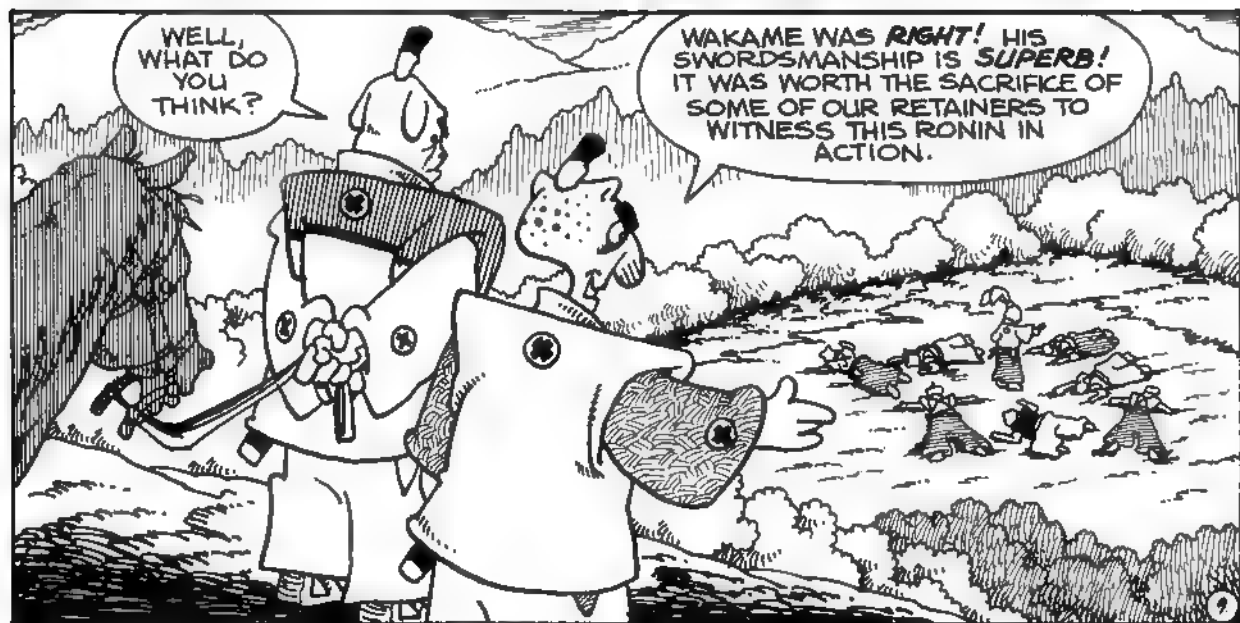
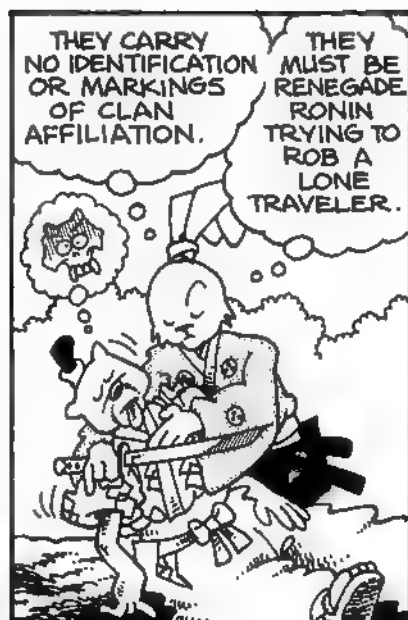
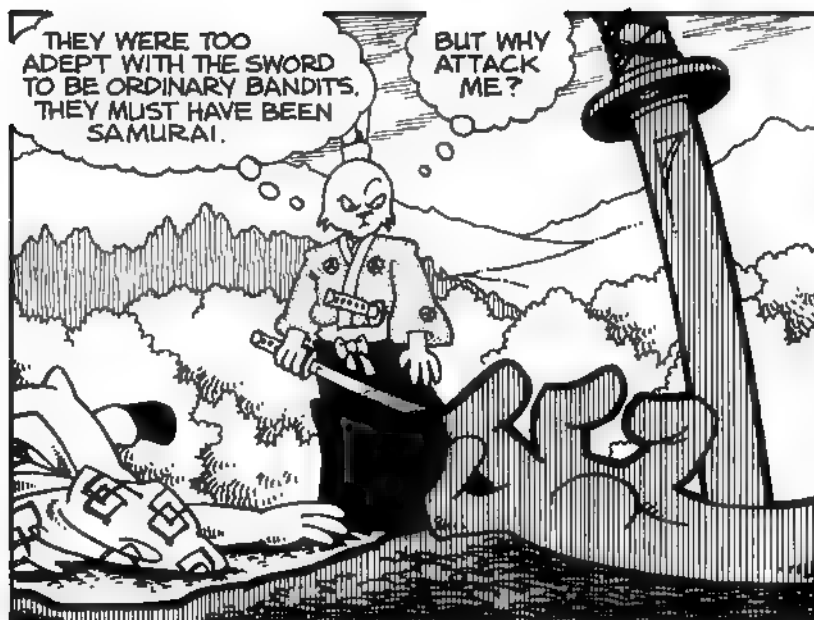




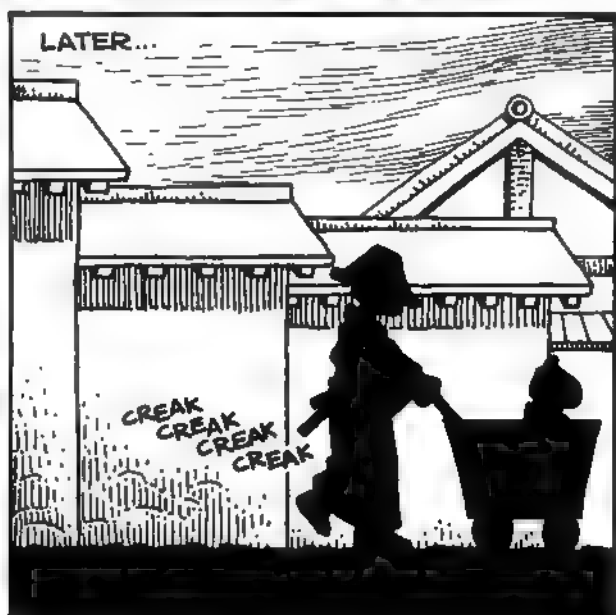


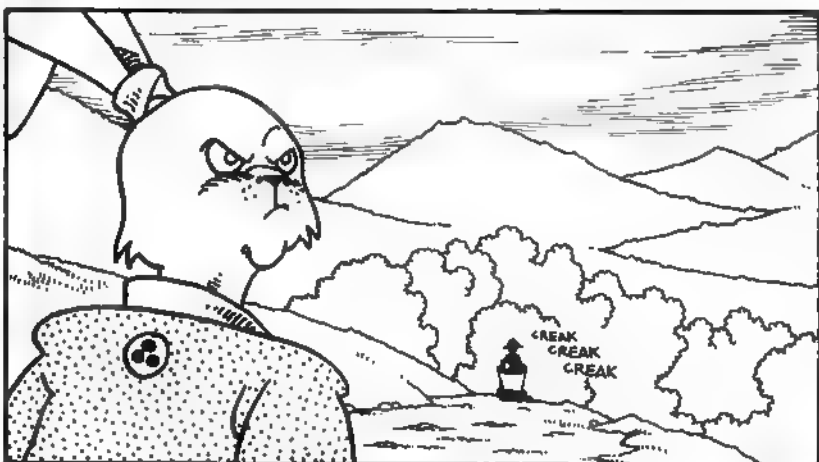
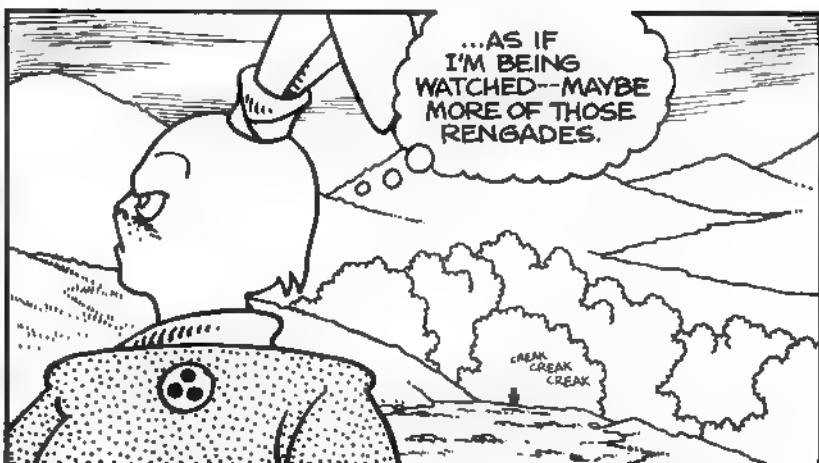
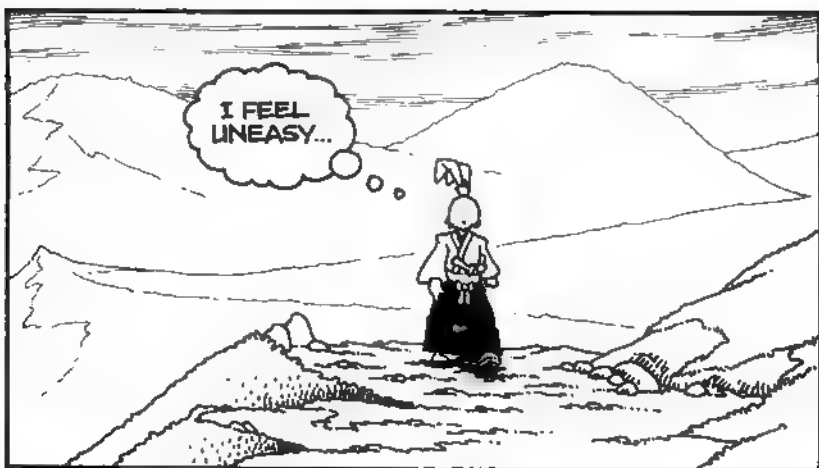


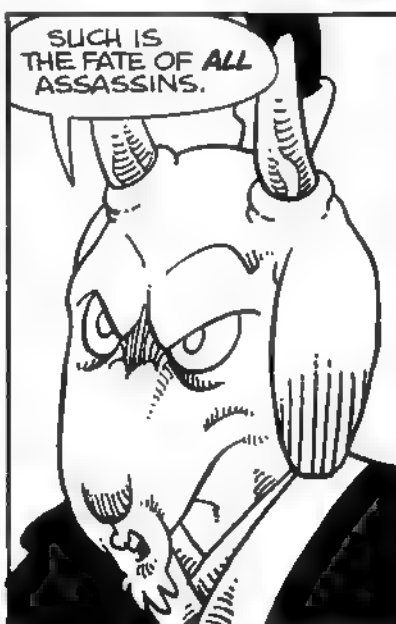
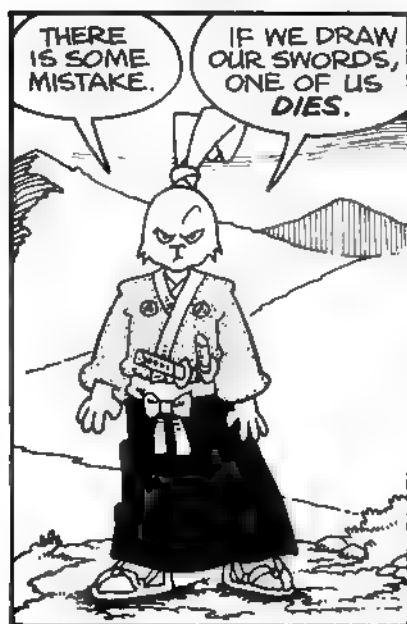
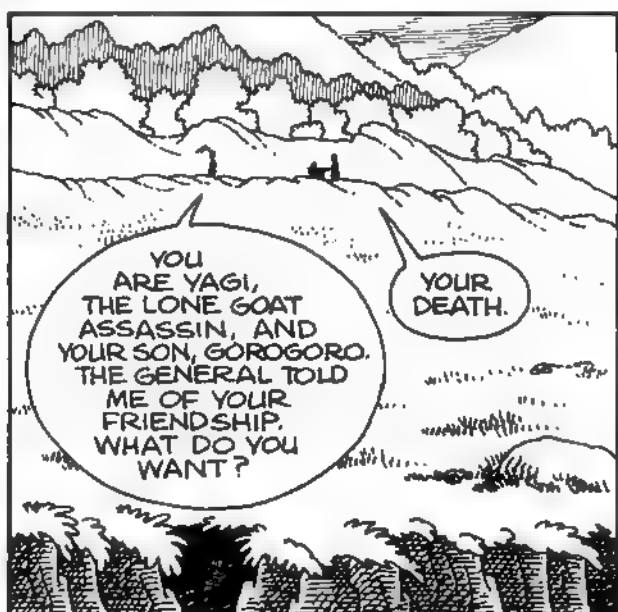
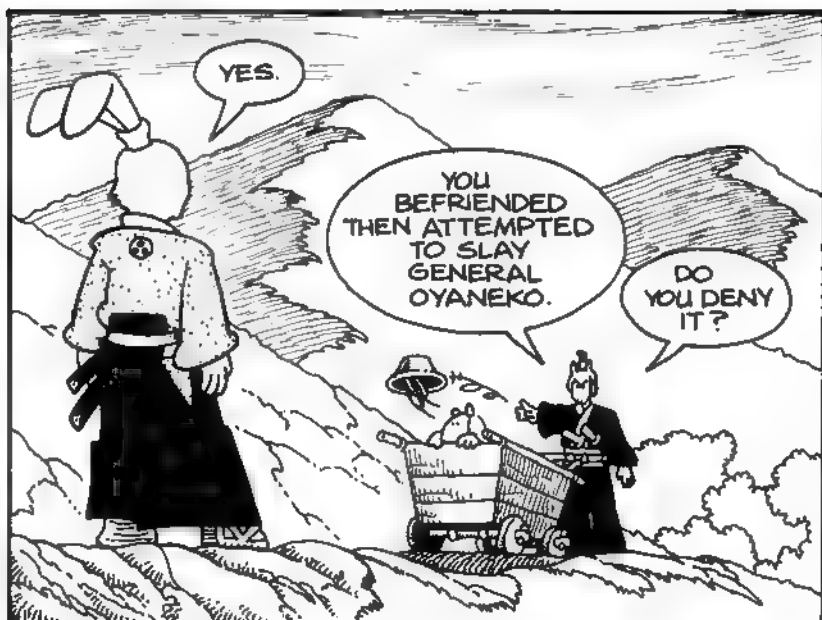


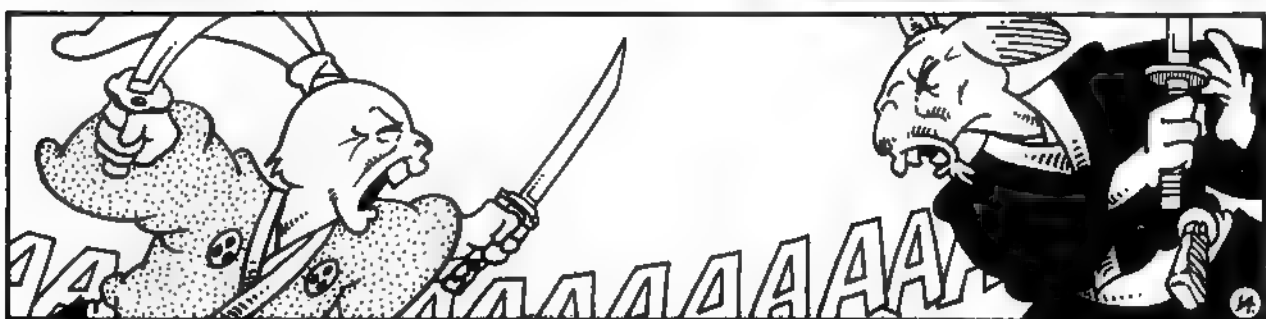
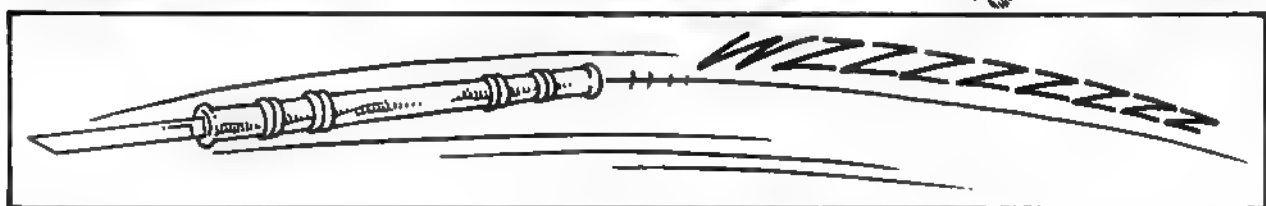
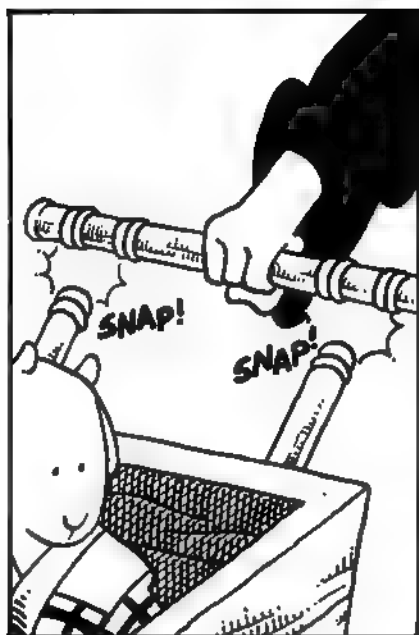


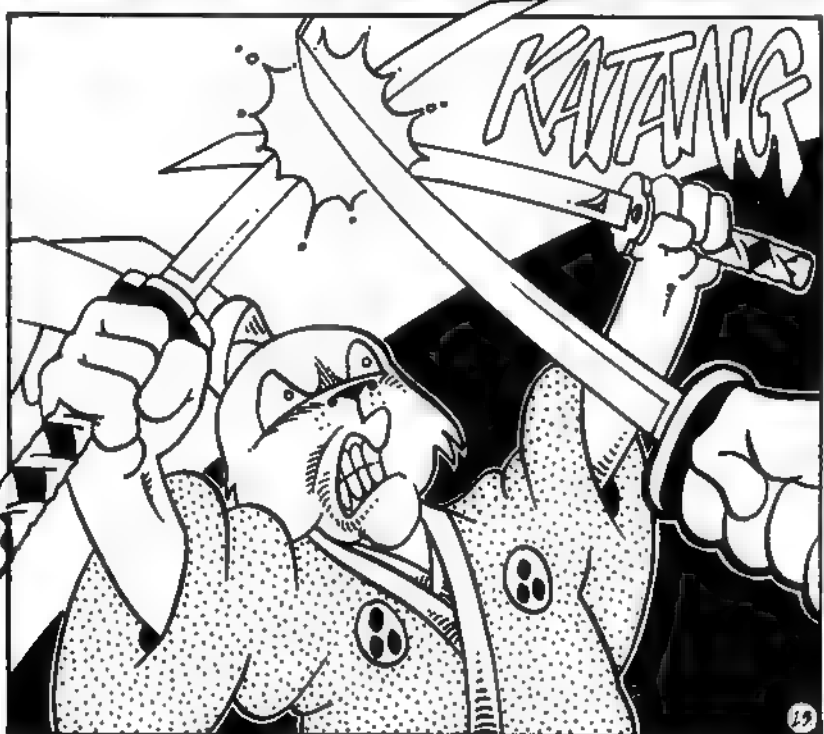


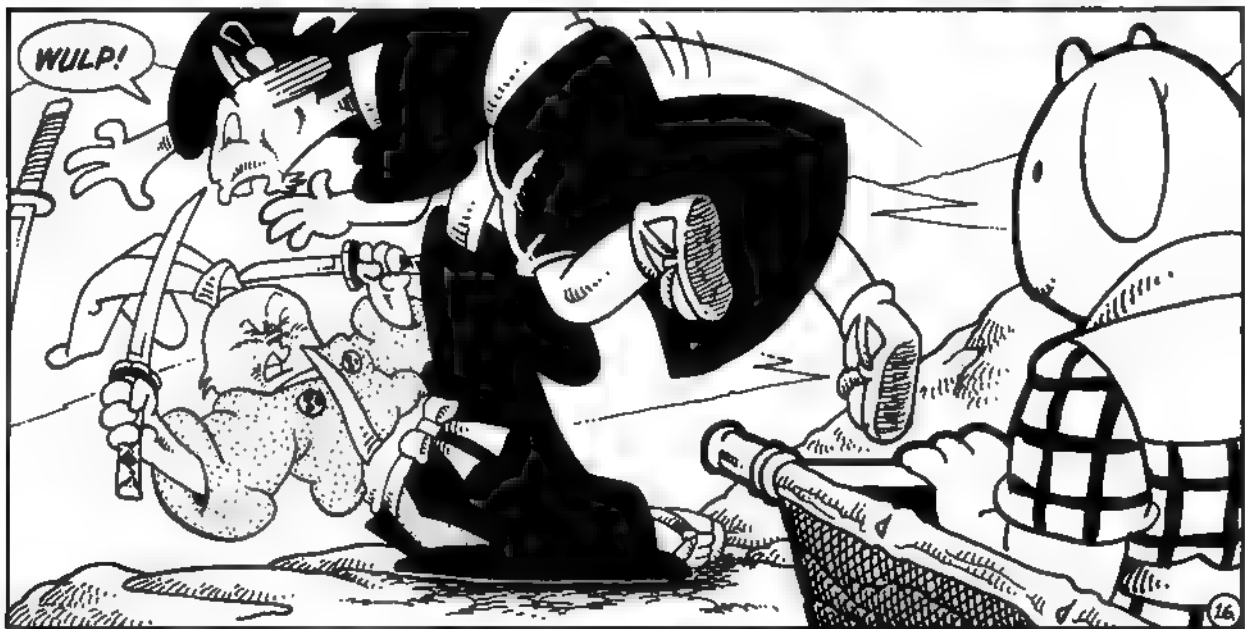


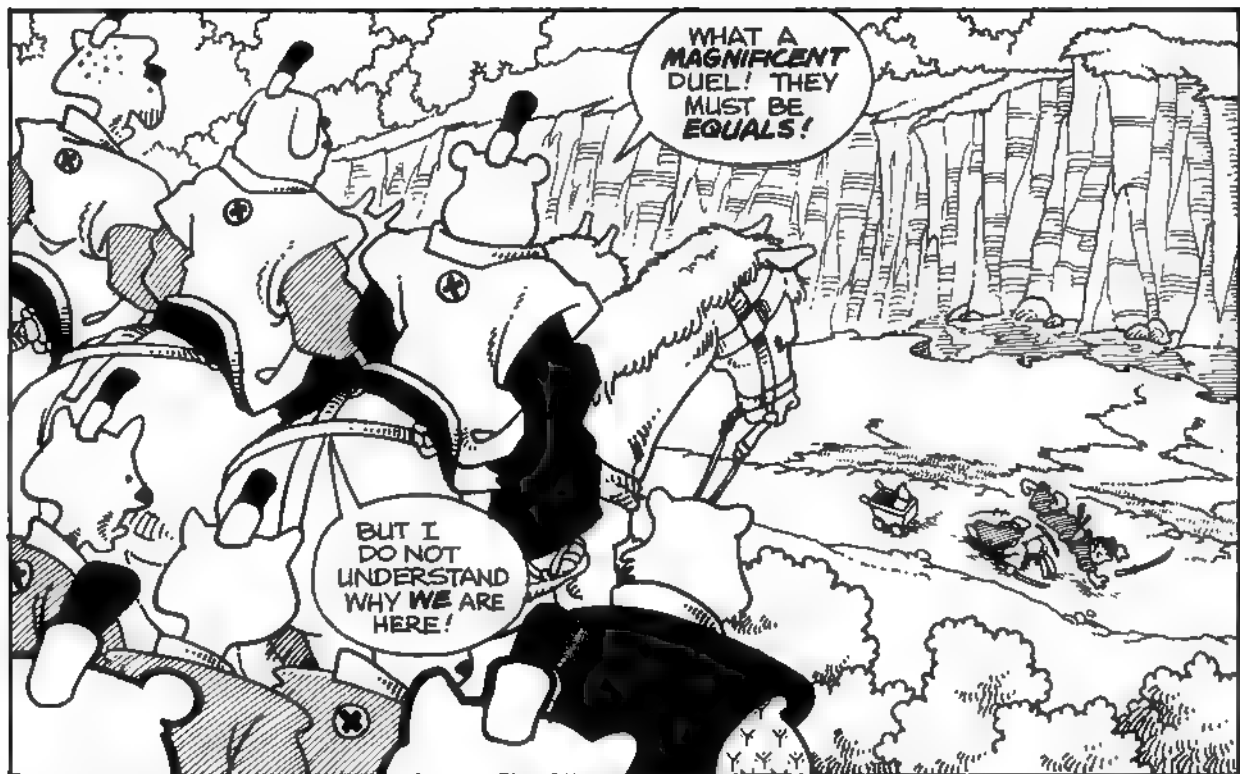


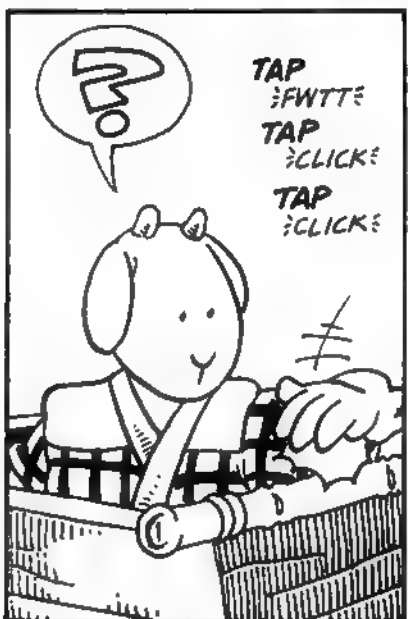
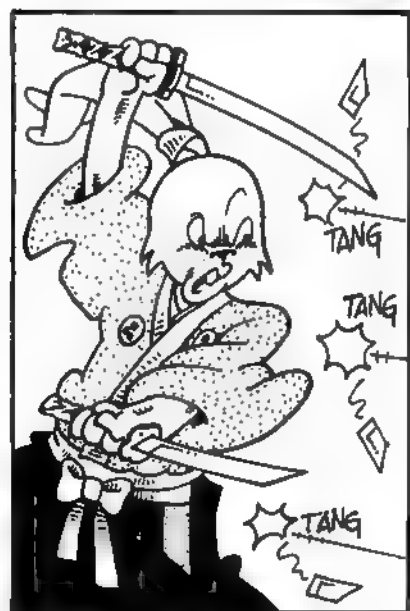
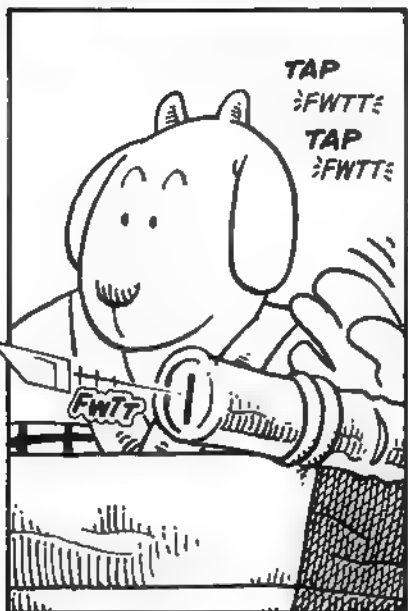
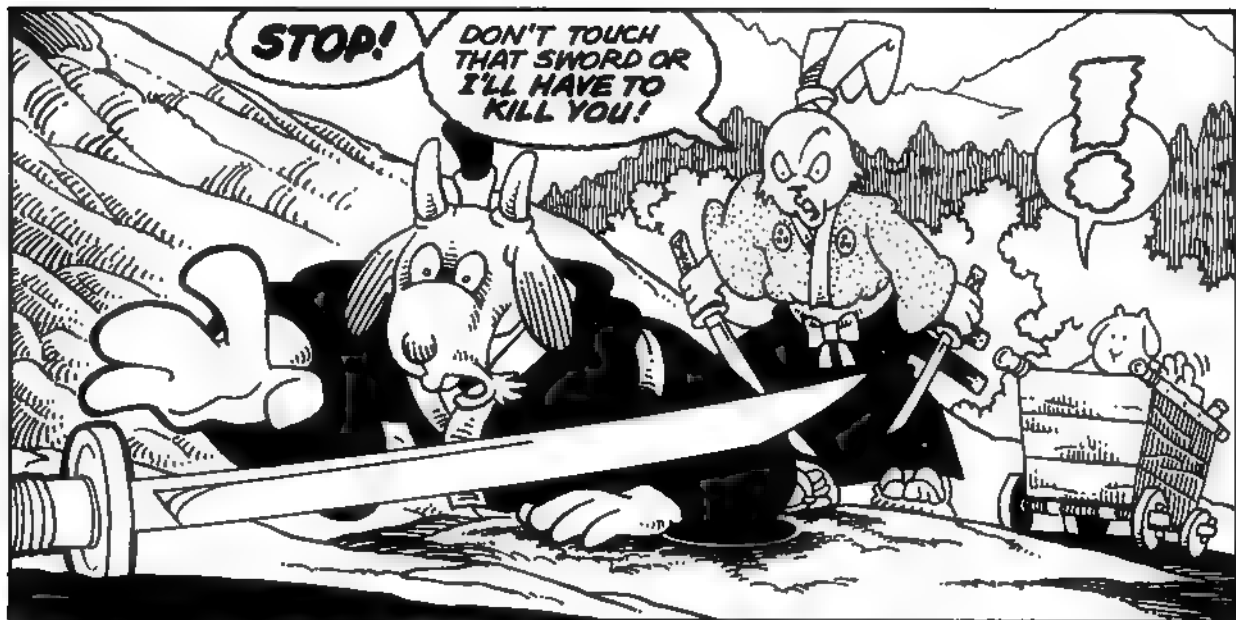


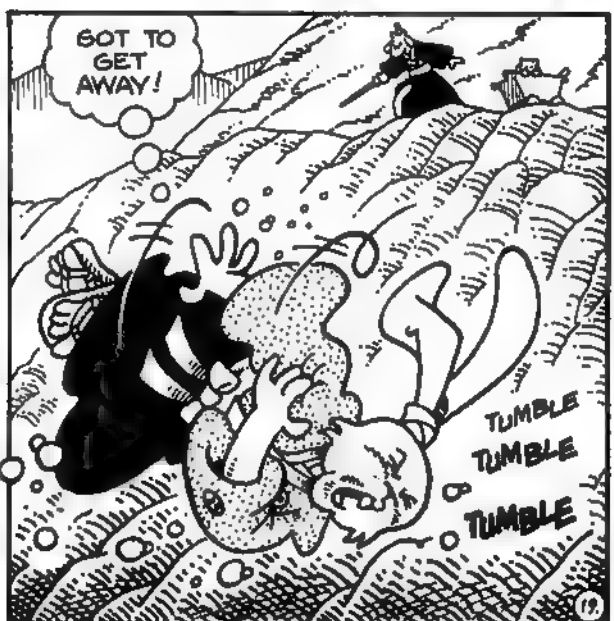
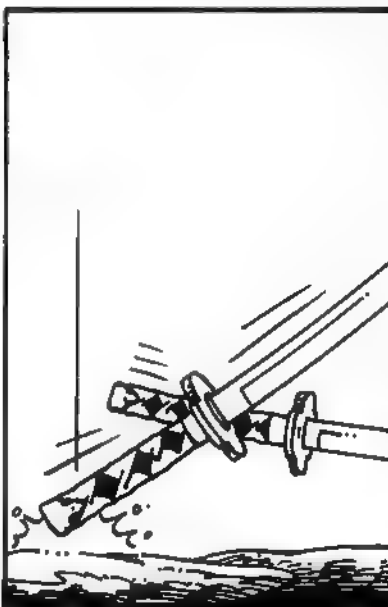
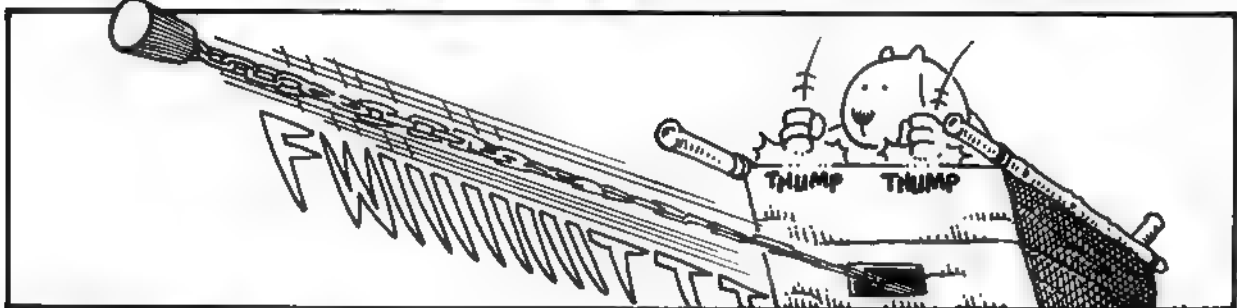








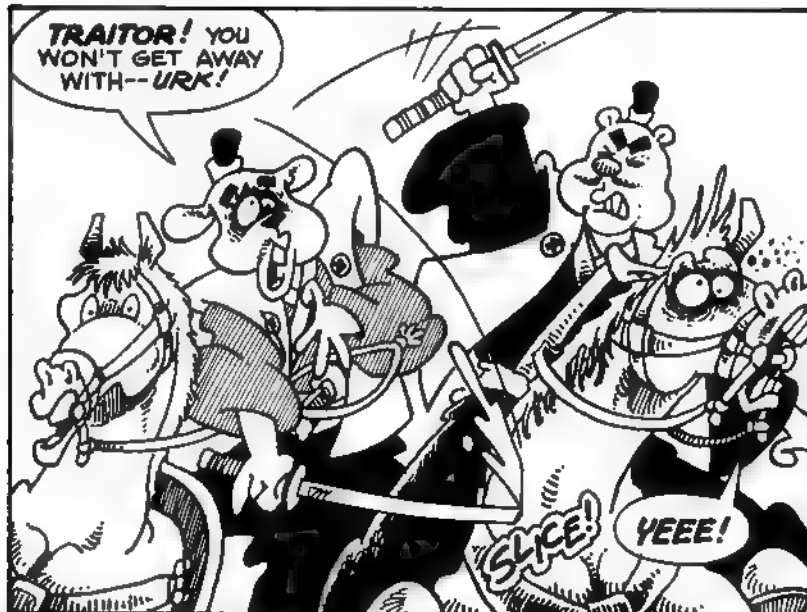




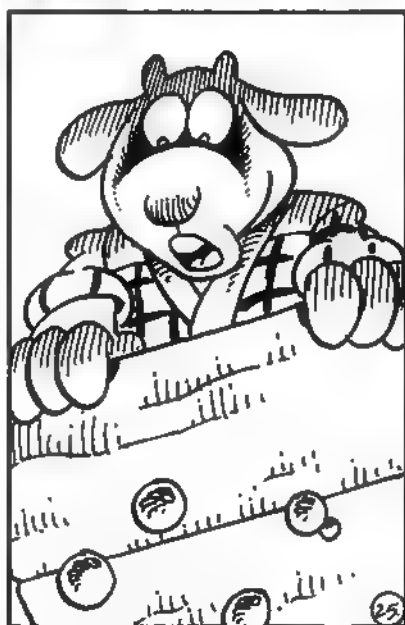
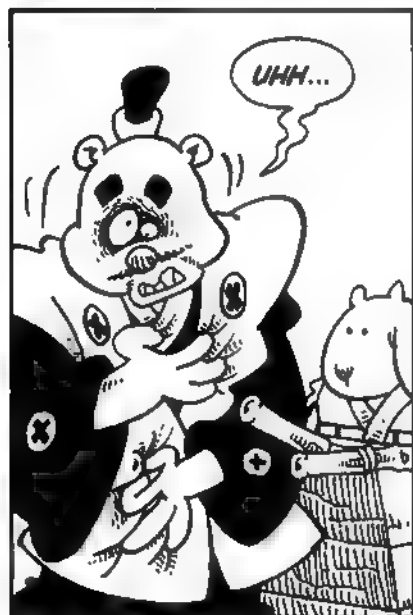


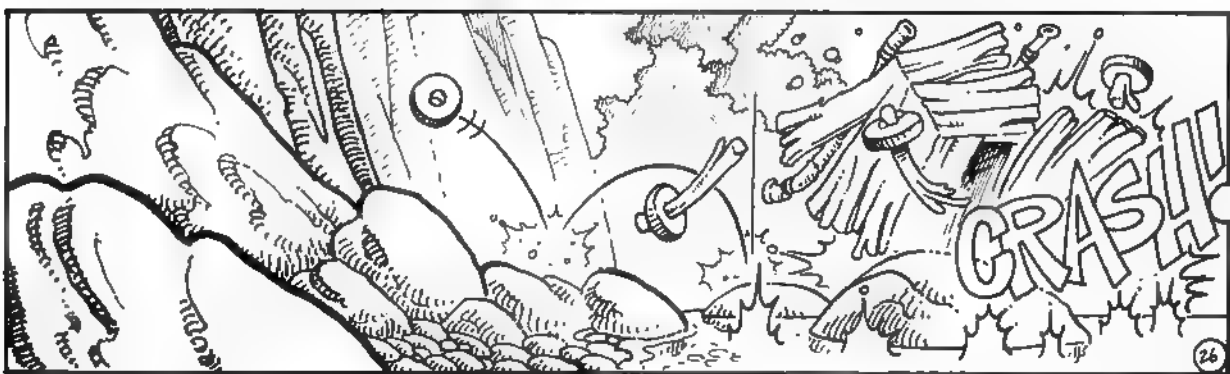
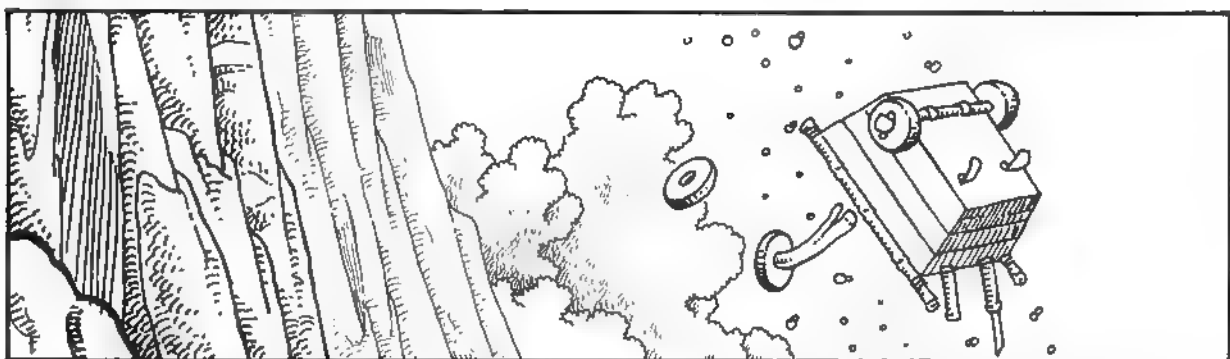
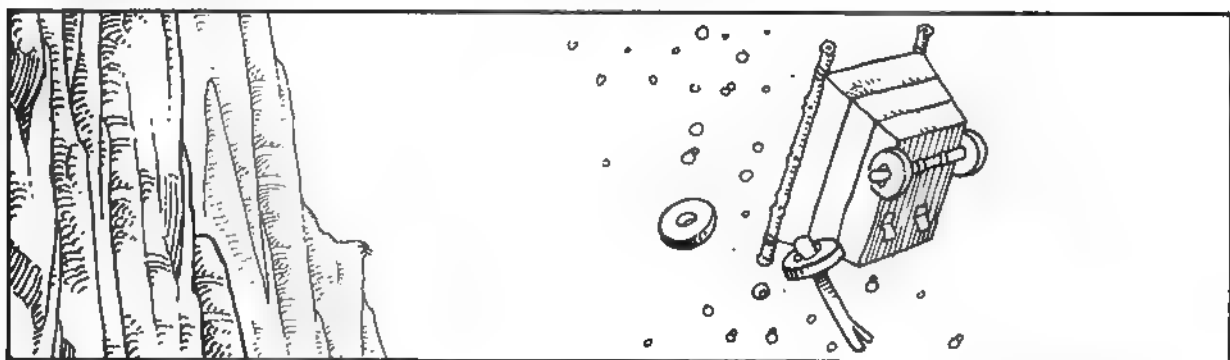
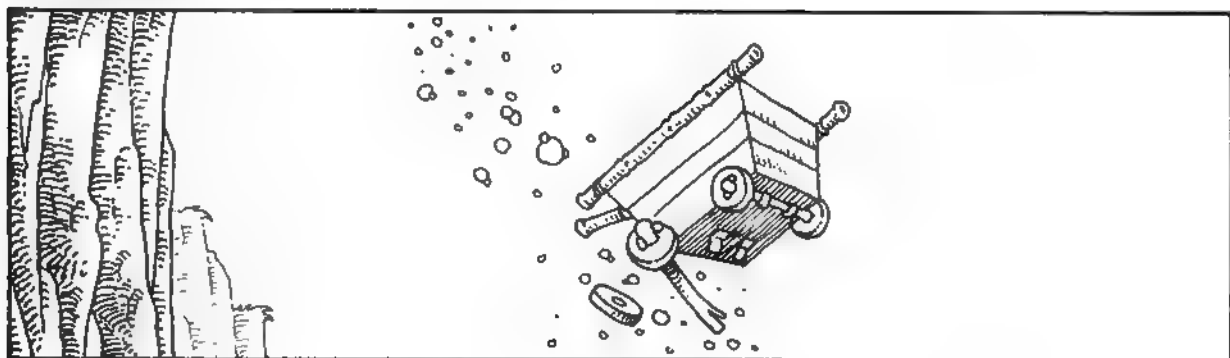


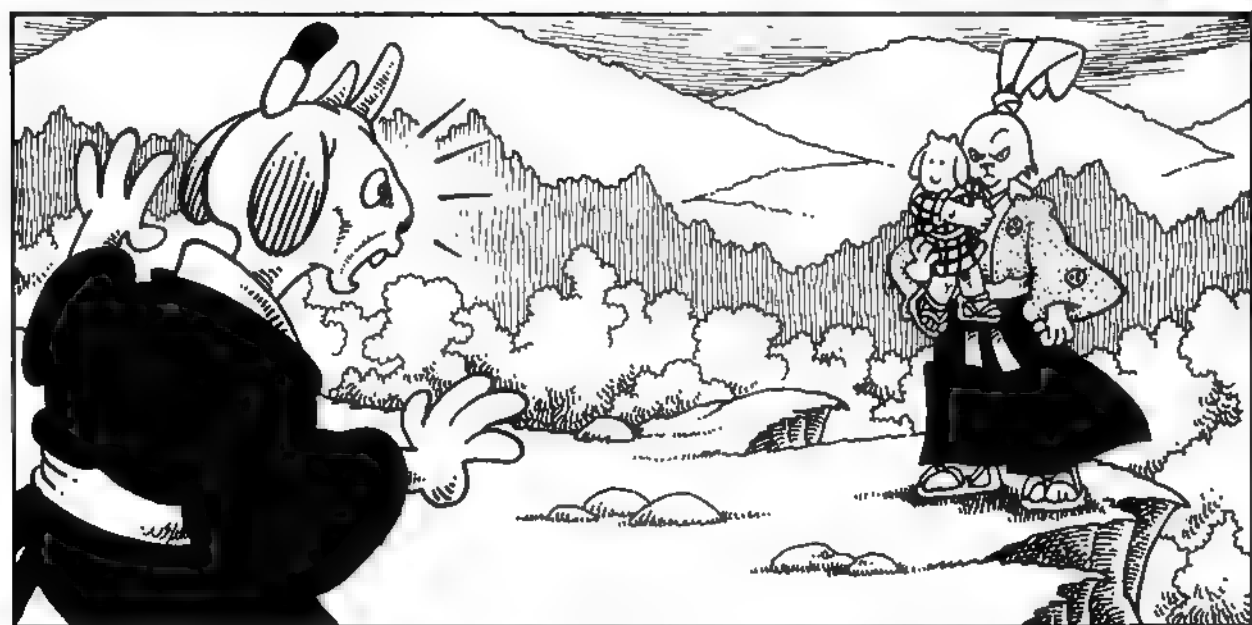


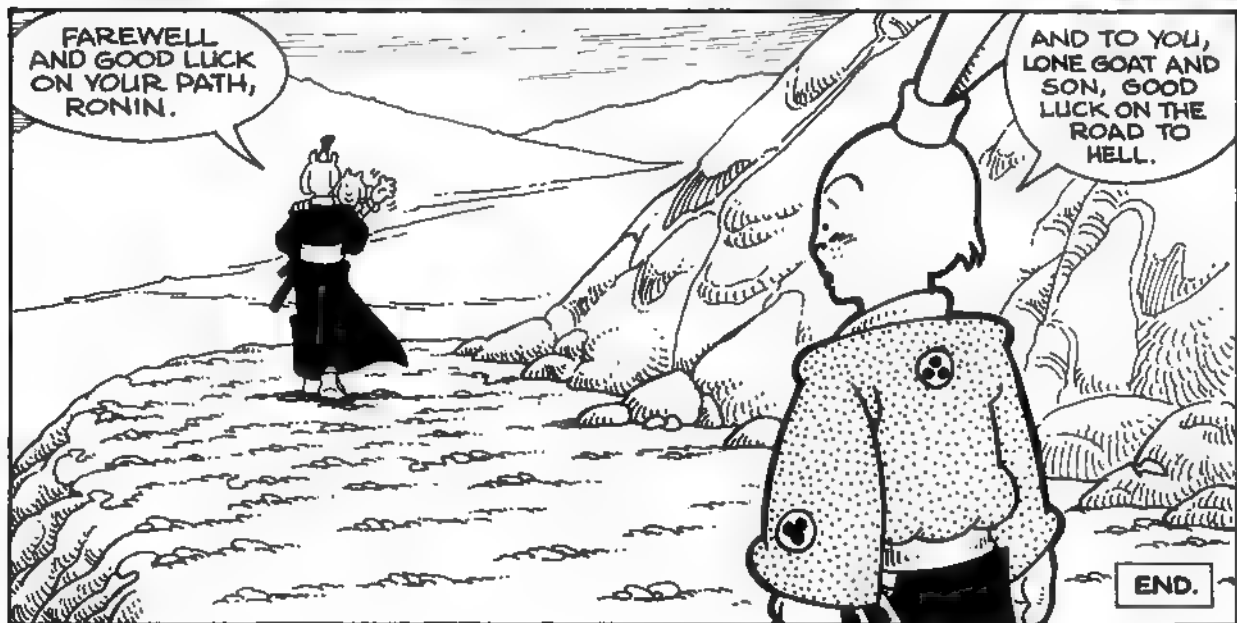
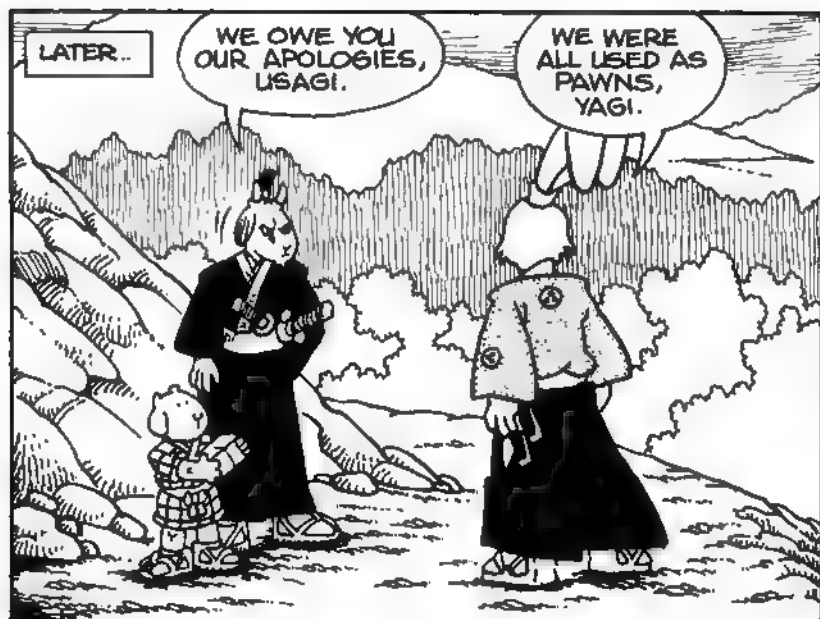












USAGI LETTERS

Send to: 7563 Lake City Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98115

Near-omniscient as ye olde ED. is, there are some questions that are beyond him—thus this special Usagi lettercol, in which all the answers are penned by Mr. Sakai himself. We hope you enjoy it, and I'll be back to defend the fort next time around.

By the way, we're finalizing plans to release Usagi Yojimbo Book Four: The Dragon Bellow Conspiracy initially as a hardcover, limited-run volume, with some special stuff thrown in. Watch this space for details on how you can order this book (due out in November)!

Also, Stan Sakai will be visiting Seattle in the first week of September, so fans from the Pacific Northwest should keep their eyes peeled for announcements of Stan's appearance at a local convention and at least one local comics shop. (Of course, Stan will also be attending the San Diego Comic Convention, in the first week of August.)

Stan's always got lots of books to sell and sign, and lots of original artwork and special prints, so his personal appearances are not to be missed!

—ED.

Dear Mr. Sakai,

First of all, I would like to commend you on the quality of the "Dragon Bellow Conspiracy." I have truly enjoyed following Usagi and his friends through their many adventures. While I, too, was disappointed with the death of Spot, I would like to applaud the way in which it was handled. I believe that Spot's sacrifice was very much in character with the nobility he displayed in life. He deserved no other death than that of a hero and defender of the innocent.

The question I do have concerns the Usagi-Torame confrontation. Why was only the first riddle mentioned (the Warrior riddle)? What about the second catechism of #15, the one on the justification of rebellion which puzzled Usagi? Wouldn't have Captain Torame have been justified to turncoat and join the succeeding rebellion against Lord Tamakuto? Torame's death seemed more unjustified and useless than Spot's, although it did add to the tragedy of the "Conspiracy."

Sincerely,

JAMES KOIZUMI
Placentia, CA

● Torame told Usagi that second riddle to justify his Lord Tamakuro's planned rebellion against the Shogun. Torame, as a strict devotee of Bushido, knew Usagi was right when he said there could be no reason for a true samurai to turn against his master no matter how unprincipled that master might be.

—STAN SAKAI

Dear Stan and Kim,

I have always wanted to write, but never had the time. After reading your latest, I had to write. I never read your comic until I found one in my brother's room. Since then, I eagerly await every issue. I love good artwork, and have collected from many different sources; paintings, comics, drawing, and now *Usagi Yojimbo*. My Usagi print hangs right between a Disney serigraph and an Albrecht Durer print because I know it is fated for greatness. I just read issue #20. It was wonderful. The only problem is it was too short. I could have read at least 200 or 300 more pages. I really enjoy the stories you write.

Well, enough of this—on to the questions. I've read Miyamoto Musashi's *A Book of Five Rings* (go rin no sho). Are there any similar characteristics between Usagi and Musashi? Will you ever have Usagi be a teacher? Will you ever do more artwork for sale? I know you know Sergio Aragones and sometimes I see Groo in *Usagi Yojimbo* and vice versa. Will there ever be a Usagi/Groo just for fun? Will Usagi be with more Ninja Turtles now that they are on TV? I always enjoy reading *Usagi*. I hope to see your work for a long time. If you use this letter in your comic, feel free to edit it wherever you want. If not at all, then make at least two points with a fall away jumper.

Sincerely,

TIM WELKE
Newbury Park, CA

● Your question about Miyamoto Musashi was answered in the letters column of issue #21.

As for being a teacher, Usagi, like Musashi when he was a wanderer, considers himself still a student.

I usually have original artwork (not pages, though) for sale at conventions and book signings. I don't like to work through the mails because I just don't have the time to do commissioned art.

Groo and Usagi will never meet. Groo hates sashimi and Usagi can't stand cheese dip.

Usagi was in two episodes of the *Ninja Turtles* TV series and there were three cross-over stories with Leonardo. It was great fun working with them and hope to again, but there are no plans for another meeting in the near future.

—STAN SAKAI

Dear Stan and Co.,

I just picked up my first three issues of *Usagi Yojimbo*—issues #4, 13, and 21

—and I was pleasantly surprised. When I first saw *Usagi Yojimbo* it was in an episode of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Well, anyway, I figured the comic, *UY*, was boring and childish like the *TMNT* cartoon, a mockery of the comic book series, boy, was I wrong! The artwork in *Usagi* is refreshing and energetic, some of the best comic art I've ever seen, and I mean that sincerely and the storylines breathe new life to the boring comic book genre that comics like *Batman* and the *X-Men* have created. (Don't get me wrong: I like *TMNT*, *X-Men*, and *Batman*, but I yearn for something different—*Usagi Yojimbo*.)

Lastly, I have a few questions and suggestions: first, how about Stan doing an art instruction comic like "How to draw comics the Stan Sakai way" or something along the same lines? Are the *Usagi* silkscreens still available? How did you (Stan) break into the comics industry? How about a *Usagi* fan club? Were any of the characters in *UY* styled after real people?

Well, I guess that's about all for now. Keep up the great work!

Respectfully,

DONALD UNGER, JR.
Binghampton, NY

● I hope to do a backup story in which I chronicle how an issue of *Usagi* gets created from the initial story idea, to the layout, pencils, lettering, then inking. However, don't expect it in the near-future because the backup slots are pretty well filled and, besides, I've got to figure out how I do it myself.

My first break into comics was as the letterer for Sergio Aragones' Groo the Wanderer, which I still do. My first comic book story and art was printed in Steve Gallacci's *Albedo* comics. Kim Thompson, publisher extraordinaire, immediately recognized me for the genius I am and offered me a contract.

There are no *Usagi* fan clubs.

Many of the characters in *Usagi* were inspired by people in history or Japanese fiction. *Usagi* himself was very loosely based on Miyamoto Musashi, a samurai who lived in the turn of 17th century Japan.

There was a samurai woman named Tomoe Gozen who was remarkable for her beauty and courage. She became Tomoe Ame. Tomoe Ame, by the way, is also the name of a Japanese rice candy.

Zato-Ichi, the blind swordspig, was inspired by Zato-Ichi, the blind swordsman, the star of 27 movies and a TV series. Zato-Ichi was recently updated and westernized into a movie starring Ruger Hauer.

—STAN SAKAI

Dear Stan and Kim,

How come in some pictures Usagi has

short sleeves and in other pictures he has long sleeves?

JEFFREY D. SEARLES
Upton, MA

● *The sleeves of traditional Japanese clothing tend to be rather large. Sometimes they are gathered and tied back with a cord so they don't get in the way. That is why Usagi sometimes appears to have short sleeves.* —STAN SAKAI

Dear Mr. Sakai,

What's this? Usagi's been in the *Turtles* cartoon and Usagi figures are out—don't do it, Stan! At the very least, leave the comic the way it is! The latest issue is brilliant! The Komoki ninja are a great idea! I liked the way they used tree branches like a ninja eggshell bomb on page 17. Despite what people say, I like the backup stories and Panda Khan/Dragon Hide was the best (even if it was written in a heavy and confusing manner).

Finally, will we be able to get "Dragon Bellow Conspiracy" as a graphic novel? Why are *UY* graphics so hard to get over here? And why does the gambling bear in issue #19 wear a mawashi?

Bye for now,

EWART SOLOMON

St. Agnes, Cornwall, ENGLAND

● *The Usagi comic books stay the way it is. No one else has any input into the stories except, of course, Sharon, who insists I use that cute little goat kid again.*

A mawashi is the traditional loincloth worn by sumo wrestlers. It is stylized and very thick to give opponents something to grab. The gambler, though, was wearing a fundoshi which many men and boys used as undergarments. It was sometimes worn by itself while working or at certain festivals. —STAN SAKAI

Dear Mr. Sakai and Kim Thompson,

I'm a new reader of *Usagi Yojimbo*. The only one I have is #22. I collect a lot of comics; one day my older brother saw Usagi on the *TMNT* cartoon show and said he's in a comic book. So I started looking for it. I finally found one. One! I looked all over, no back issues, not even the color edition. Well, the reason I wrote was to tell you how greatly I enjoyed *Usagi Yojimbo*. I have one question, though. Does Usagi have a tail?

JACOB SHELTON

Renton, WA

● *Five years, and you're the first person to ask this question. I knew it would come up some day, and I've dreaded it since the beginning.*

Frankly, I don't know. I don't know if any of my characters have tails. I know they should have tails, but giving them tails

would make them somehow a bit too animalistic.

I've avoided answering this question by always keeping my characters clothed.

I guess this is something theologians will debate for years to come, along with creationism vs. evolution. —STAN SAKAI

Dear Mr. Sakai,

I have just purchased and read my first *Usagi Yojimbo* comic ("Blood Wings") in black-and-white, and I enjoyed it very much except for the useless bloody scenes and the killing. Isn't there a way you could tell the stories (keeping the excitement and adventure) without someone dying? That is the only criticism I have. I enjoyed the artwork and characters very much.

I will keep looking at new issues, but if they aren't more humane, I probably won't buy.

VIVIAN TUSSEY

Longmont, CO

● *I do not put any gratuitous violence in any of my stories, but I would never compromise the story by cutting out a violent scene or scenes.*

Nor will I compromise the culture and traditions that my stories are based upon. 17th century Japan was a feudal society governed by a military dictatorship that arose after a bloody civil war. It also had a strict caste system in which the lower you were on the social

ladder, the less important your life was looked upon. Your life did not belong to you but to your group or your master, and everyone had a master. The greatest honor one could have was to give your life to your lord.

By today's standards it may sound like an oppressive, inhumane society, but it worked for the situations and the times and it would be a grave error to judge a foreign society by our own standards.

True, these are just comic book stories, but still, I try to keep it as faithful to my heritage as I can.

We obviously share a difference of opinion in how a story should be told. I'm sorry to lose your readership.

—STAN SAKAI

Dear Kim and Stan,

Issue #20 was great. The art was Sakai-ish as usual. I also liked how you used the *Canterbury Tales* type point of view of each character.

I loved Jim Lawson's story. It's just that now I'll think differently of Tokage.

Elsetime!

CHUCK DILLON

Philadelphia, PA

● *Chuck did the cool "Usagi as a gang member" drawing that graces this page.* —ED.



FORGET *ANYTHING* AND *EVERYTHING*
YOU'VE EVER READ BEFORE!

SEE : *Bizarre jungle rituals performed in the dead of night!*

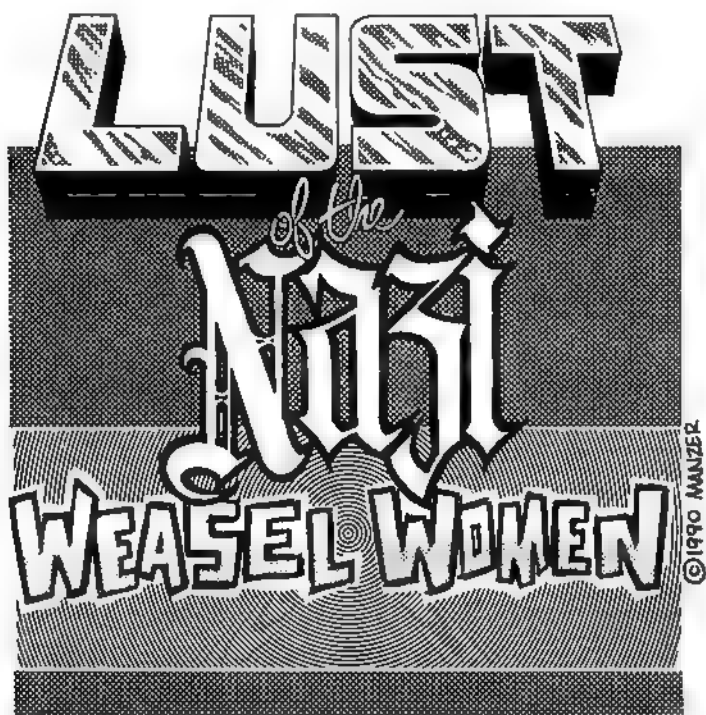
SEE : *A parrot with a hideous past!*

SEE : *The savage women society couldn't tame!*

SEE : *Startling feats of magic performed by a bunny!*

SEE : *A man thrust into a sprawling saga of blood,
fists, ventriloquism, and sex!*

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Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Beezlebub intrudes in Herman and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: A daring escape, the Captain in drag.

Adventures of Captain Jack #9: Pool hustling with Saturated Fats, and more of Janet-Herman-Beezlebub!

Adventures of Captain Jack #10: Jack and the crew return to Detroit and discover lots of unpaid bills.



Adventures of Captain Jack #11: Jack meets up with the mob.

Adventures of Captain Jack #12: The grand finale of the series, as things will never be the same.

Har Har Comics #1: 24 pages of Kazaleh madness, with photo cover!

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birthingright* continue, Tom Stazer's *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birthingright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper*!

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* story, *Birthingright* concludes with cover, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

Critters #8: *Jack Bunry* by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Hallowe'en issue with *Gnuff* behind a mask, *Lionheart*'s nightmare, and *Dog Boy*.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover! story, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #12: *Birthingright* returns, plus Waller/Worley's *SpeakingStone*, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover, plus *Birthingright* and Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthingright* and *Gnuff*.

Critters #15: *Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken*, and *Birthingright* races on!

Critters #16: *Gnuff* ends, another *Nilson Groundthumper* story by Sakai, and *Birthingright*!

Critters #17: *Lionheart* returns, plus the conclusion of *Birthingright*.

Critters #19: *Gnuff* returns, plus *Sam and Max*, *Freelance Police*, *Lizards*, and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #20: *SpeakingStone* by Waller/Worley, *Gnuff* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #21: More *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*—32 pages' worth—plus a Sam Kieth cover!

Critters #22: *Watchmen* cover parody for *Blue Beagle* story, plus *Gnuff*, *Fission Chicken*, and *Ambrose*. (Also available: non-cover-parody version.)

Critters #23: Christmas issue with *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*, *Lionheart*, as well as strips by Schirmeister, Kieth, Fuller, Kazaleh, Templeton—plus a flexidisc with songs written and performed by Templeton & Alan Moore!

Critters #24: *Gnuff* continues, plus *Lizards* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #25: The return of *Lionheart*, plus *Gnuff* and *Angst*.

Critters #26: *Angst* cover by Van Horn, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #27: Stan Sakai cover and *Nilson Groundthumper* story, plus *Lionheart* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #28: *Blue Beagle* in "Miami Vice"/Coke parody, plus *Lionheart* and *Fission Chicken*.

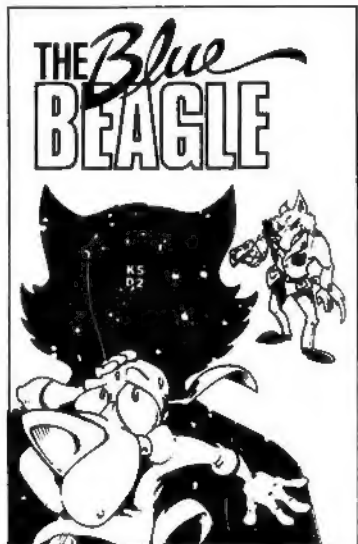
Critters #29: The climax to *Lionheart*, plus *Lizards*, the wacky German cartoonist Volker Reiche, and a one-page *Captain Jack*.

Critters #30: Mark Martin cover and story, plus *Angst*, *Fission Chicken*, and *Gnuff* returns.

Critters #31: *Gnuff* cover featured, plus *Lizards*, *Blue Beagle*, and a Steve Bissette one-page.

Critters #32: *Lizards* continues with a cover, *Gnuff*, and a new *Fission Chicken* story—plus DeStefano!

Critters #33: *Fission Chicken* cover, *Gnuff* concludes, and *Angst*.



Critters #34: *Blue Beagle* returns, the premiere of *Duck "Bill" Platypus*, and a Hallowe'en horror tale.

Critters #35: Lela Dowling cover, *Fission Chicken*, the beginning of a new *Lionheart*, and *Duck "Bill" Platypus*.

Critters #36: Featuring the continuation of *Lionheart*, *Fission Chicken*, and *Duck "Bill"*.

Critters #37: Mike Kazaleh cover and story, conclusion to *Lionheart*.

Critters #38: Giant issue with *Usagi Yojimbo*, *Blue Beagle*, *Fission Chicken*, *Angst*, and Donna Barr's *Stinz*.

Critters #39: A full-length *Fission Chicken* story parodies the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Critters #40: *Gnuff* returns in a full-length story by Freddy Milton.

Critters #41: Book-length *Duck "Bill" Platypus* tale.

Critters #42: *Not the Adventures of Captain Jack* by Mike Kazaleh, starring Herman and Janet.

Critters #43: *Lionheart* faces a possibly malevolent alien in an apartment building.

Critters #44: The gripping climax to the *Blue Beagle* "Watchdogs" saga—with a surprise ending!

Critters #45: William Van Horn's *Ambrose* is featured in a collection of gag strips.

Critters #46: Lionheart's latest: Dental hygiene and industrial espionage!

Critters #47-49: Gallacci's "Birth-right" returns for its final chapter.

Critters #50: Grand finale issue, with Neil the Horse, Sam and Max, Usagi Yojimbo, Teddy Payne, Fission Chicken, much more. Eighty pages!

Critters Special #1—Nilson Groundthumper and Hermy: Both the *Albedo* stories, plus a new 10-page strip!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Still available!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

Dog Boy #3: Dog Boy shows how to publish your own comic book.

Dog Boy #4: Dog Boy goes to Hell, and Dog Girl squashes Reagan!

Dog Boy #5: Back in stock!

Dog Boy #6: This one too!

Dog Boy #8: Alfred Knoot starts a newspaper, Dog Girl does graffiti.

Dog Boy #9: Dancing with the cats, Dog Girl in jail, Benb goes crazy!

FISSION CHICKEN

Fission Chicken #1: "The Wizard of Ooze," plus "Duck 'Bill' Platypus."

Fission Chicken #2: Nightmare on Elmer Street!

Fission Chicken #3: Are the Vortexians back?

Fission Chicken #4: No, in fact, but there's another menace lurking...

GROOTLORE

Grootlore #1: Peter Gullerud's fantasy strips, with a new cover and intro.

Grootlore #2: More tales of Loadoad and the rest of the gang.

HUGO

Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: Hugo becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: Hugo is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

MYRON MOOSE

Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wiggly books.

Myron Moose Funnies #2: Parodies Batman, Mickey Mouse, Spirit, more.

Myron Moose Funnies #3: "Comic Book Fans," and more silly snot.

USAGI YOJIMBO

Usagi Yojimbo #3: The continuation of "Samurai," and a "Croakers" strip by Don Dougherty.

Usagi Yojimbo #8: "A Mother's Love," plus Luth's "Rockhoppers."

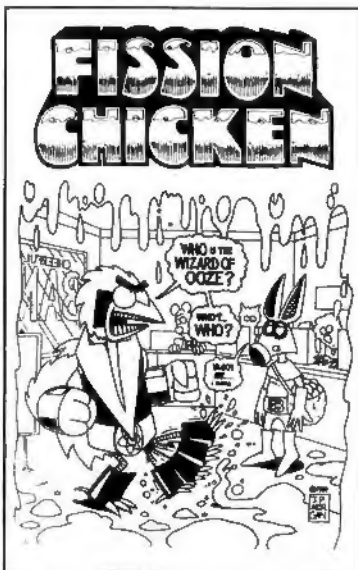
Usagi Yojimbo #19: "Frost and Fire" plus the return of Nilson Groundthumper.

Usagi Yojimbo #20: A story of kites, plus a Usagi story by Jim Lawson.

Usagi Yojimbo #21: The evil ninja bats attack—plus Panda Khan!

Usagi Yojimbo #22: Conclusion of the ninja bats story, plus a Ken Mitchrone back-up!

Usagi Yojimbo #23: A tale of old age and honor, plus a Stazer/Sakai "Lionheart" back-up.



Usagi Yojimbo #24: A full-length, all-Sakai issue featuring "Lone Goat and Kid"!

Usagi Yojimbo #25: The demon of the bridge, plus a Stazer/Morgan "Lionheart" collaboration.

Usagi Yojimbo Color Special #1: New Sakai stuff, plus classic cover reprints and a *Gnuff* story!



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Usagi Yojimbo Book One: Every *Usagi Yojimbo* story before *Usagi #1* collected in one handy 160-page volume, with a new Stan Sakai cover.

Usagi Yojimbo Book Two: The complete "Samurai" origin saga, plus more stories and an intro by Evanier.

Usagi Yojimbo Book Three: Usagi's entire origin story, plus a back-up guest-starring Leonardo the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle; Asprin intro!

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on *Neil the Horse* and Dave Sim on *Cerebus*!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

Amazing Heroes #129: Interviews with Steven A. Gallacci and Freddy Milton, the new *Mighty Mouse* show!

Doomsday Squad #5: Features a spectacular full-color Captain Jack story by Mike Kazaleh!

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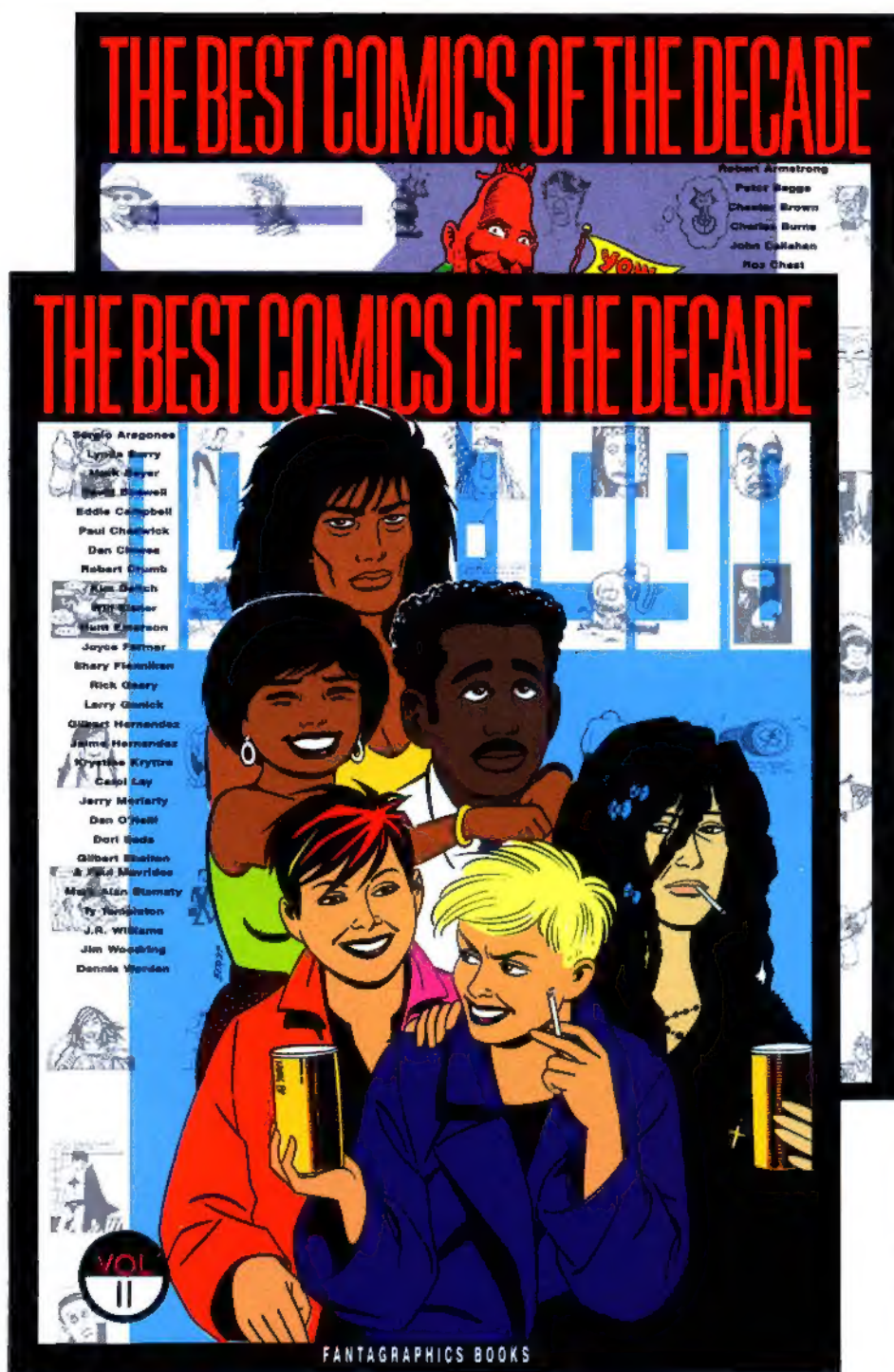
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